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## *Memorandum*

TO: Operations Committee

DATE: April 1, 2011

FR: Executive Director

W.I.: 6031

RE: Call Box Program Evaluation

Staff will be conducting an evaluation of the Bay Area call box program to ensure that the system is continuing to deliver motorist safety benefits and operate cost-effectively. A report will be provided to this committee in the Fall with conclusions and recommendations.

### **Background**

The call box program was implemented in 1988, providing a network of telephones along freeways, highways, and county roads where motorists can summon help when experiencing car trouble. The program enhances safety and reduces congestion by dispatching immediate response to clear roadway incidents.

Funding for call boxes is provided from State vehicle registration fees, from which the program receives approximately \$6 million per year specifically dedicated to call boxes and motorist aid activities. Operating expenses for the call box program averages \$2 million annually, with the remaining funds transferred to projects such as the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) and 511.

At its peak in 2001, there were 3,300 call boxes in operation. In the last ten years, usage has declined by 80%, dropping from 98,000 annual calls in 2001 to 20,000 calls in 2009. MTC SAFE has undertaken various efforts to continue to operate the call box system in a cost-effective manner, including reductions in 2004 and 2006 which removed call boxes that were rarely used or near easily accessible services. Today, the system has 2,200 call boxes.

### **Call Box Program Evaluation**

With call box usage continuing to decline and other motorist aid services being introduced, the call box program needs to be continually assessed to acknowledge the trend and reviewed for efficiency in expenditure of funds.

Staff intends to conduct a program-wide assessment which includes analyzing various data including: safety of motorists, cell phone usage, call box usage by location, maintenance and telecommunication costs. This review will also involve discussions with partner agencies and various community groups. A recommendation on what changes should be made, if any, will be presented at an Operations Committee meeting in Fall 2011.

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Steve Heminger

SH: SP

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